

Strategic Reading – Informed Writing



Objective

Students learn strategies for close reading that provide valuable information about organization that will later inform their writing.

Strategies include:

- skimming and scanning for an overview of the entire text
- recognizing the importance of headings, keywords, diagrams, illustrations
- writing a summary based on information provided (text conventions)

Important Vocabulary

title, topic, headings, bold-face print, italicized print, key words, diagram, photograph, illustration, caption

Procedure

1. Explain to the class that they will be reading a selection titled Bears and that they'll be learning some strategies for how read more effectively in order to glean the most information from the piece.
2. Photocopy pp.39-40 and distribute copies to the class and project it on the white board. *To build context and background begin by showing the students numerous online images of a variety of bears (or, for the following lessons, The Giant's Causeway, Scarecrows, Ice) and discuss what, if any, prior knowledge they might have.* Then, ask them to listen carefully as you read the piece aloud to them. (This is particularly important for students who may have difficulty reading the piece independently.) This will give them a sense of what the text is all about.
3. Explain that, before they read an expository piece, it's important to look for certain cues that can provide valuable information to aid the reader's understanding. Direct their attention to the piece and ask them to annotate it together, labeling the important parts. Use the guided questions below to inform your discussion.
4. First, circle the **title**. Ask them what the **title** reveals. (the **topic**) Remind them that the topic tells the reader what the entire piece will be about. **Model** this for students and have them do the same.
5. Next, for reference purposes, number each paragraph.
6. Point out and underline the **headings**. Explain that the headings allow you to quickly skim and scan the piece and get a sense of the **main ideas** of the piece.
7. Ask them to help you fill in the summarizing framework, based solely on the title and headings.

Chart:

TOPIC: Bears

Main Idea #1: Kinds of Bears and Where they Live

Main Idea #2: Common Traits

Main Idea #3: Bear Behavior

LESSON AT A GLANCE:

Whole Class Activity

- Introduce students to text conventions.
- Modeling skimming, scanning.
- Point out how cues improve reading.
- Summarize piece.



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Discuss the way that identifying the topic and headings can set a purpose for learning. As readers they already have a good idea what they'll be reading about, which aids in comprehension. Discuss how a summary such as this might be an excellent way for an author to begin. (Helps with organization and focus.)

- Next, in each paragraph, have them locate all **bold-faced** or *italicized* words. Explain that these are key vocabulary words that might be new to the reader. These keywords are usually either preceded or followed by a definition to aid in understanding. Point out that these specially marked words indicate some of the important **details** in the piece.

(**Option:** For homework, have students create a key word vocabulary chart, listing each key - words followed by a definition they craft from the information provided in the text.)

- Point out the **photograph** and its **caption**. Ask students why both are important.
- Next, on the white board or chart paper, translate the information on the summarizing framework into an extended summary using the following sentence starters:

This expository text provides information about bears. We'll discover where different types of bears live, learn about their common traits, and become familiar with bear behavior.

Or...

This expository text provides information about The Giant's Causeway. We'll discover the unusual land forms, learn about the geology of the region, and become familiar with the legend of Finn MacCool.

This expository text discusses scarecrows, past and present. The author explores the need for scarecrows, investigates scarecrows around the world, and reveals all the ways to have fun with scarecrows.

This informative piece is all about ice cubes before the age of freezers. The author delves into the use of ice in the olden days and uncovers how harvesting ice became a business.

- Finally, have them read the text independently. Discuss how examining the following text conventions: **title, headings, bold or italicized key words, photographs** and **captions** guide their reading – think about how much they've learned before they've even started reading! Also point out the way that the author organized the information made it more accessible to the reader.

NOTE: Approach the articles on pp. 41-47 in the same fashion. You may also use any high quality magazine article or textbook chapter in the same way.



Name: _____

Bears

It's hard to believe that these large, often ferocious relatives of the dog, raccoon, and panda are the inspiration for millions of cuddly soft stuffed toys! There are many kinds of bears, living in numerous places the world over. Their behavior and shared traits fascinate their human neighbors all around the globe.

Kinds of Bears and Where They Live

Many kinds of bears can be found in a wide variety of places, mostly in wild mountain, forest, and arctic areas. In fact, bears inhabit every continent except Africa, Antarctica, and Australia. The largest bear, the **Kodiak**, which weighs almost a ton is found in the

wilderness and wide open grasslands of Alaska. The Kodiak is related to the **Grizzly**. Grizzly bears, with their dark fur edged in white, live in many areas of the United States and Canada.

Brown Bears, which are smaller than the Kodiak and Grizzly, and the **North American Black Bear** (which isn't always black, but brown, white, gold, even bluish tinted) also live in the United States and Canada. The coast of the Arctic Ocean is home to the distinctive white **Polar Bear**, thriving in the snow and ice. Asia is where the slow-moving **Sloth Bear** is

found, with its short black fur and bib of light colored fur.

Common Traits

What do all bears have in common? Scientists group them into a family of creatures called **Ursidae**. All bears are classified as **caniforms** meaning "dog-like" creatures. They have long snouts and **non-retractile** claws, just as dogs do.



Grizzly bear
(about 8 ft. long)



Student Page

Of course, bears are larger than dogs. These large furry mammals have thick, weighty bodies and can stand on their hind legs. You can recognize bears by their rather squared off snouts, short rounded ears, and short stubby tails. Their feet are similar to human feet, complete with a heel and a sole. In fact, bears' hind feet also have five toes. Their long curved sharp claws are used to tear food and to move nimbly - they can even climb trees. Bears are **carnivores** meaning that they eat mostly meat. This is why they have numerous large teeth that can grind,



Polar bear at home in the snow and ice

crush, and tear meat. However, bears also eat vegetation.

Bear Behavior

Bear's behavior has always interested people. Some bears **hibernate**, retreating to their dens, doing without food, and entering a deep sleep state in which their **metabolism** (body function) slows down dramatically. These large animals, which may appear rather clumsy and slow, are actually very fast runners. A mother bear may charge at any threat to her cubs, human or animal. In order to fuel their hefty bodies bears must eat a lot. They've been known to raid campsites and cottages, **foraging** or digging through supplies and trash in order to find something edible. Bears also love

honey and have no problem batting down a bee's nest, swiping at it with their claws, and scooping out gobs of thick, sweet, honey. Their thick fur makes it difficult for bees to sting them, although bears gladly endure stings in order to eat the bee larvae in the honey. These amazing creatures communicate through a complicated **marking system** in which they claw, gnaw, or chew at tree trunks as a means of warning other bears to stay clear of their territory.

In your world travels, if you ever find yourself in a National Park, or hiking in a nature preserve, keep your eyes open for a member of the Ursidae family. If you spot any type of bear, stay calm and move quietly away. These beautiful, yet sometimes menacing creatures, and the habitats they live in certainly deserve our respect.